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APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

NOTEBOOK WITH POUCH COVER

by

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NOTEBOOK WITH POUCH COVER

Field of the Invention

[0001] This invention relates to notebooks, and more particularly, to notebooks having a pouch for storage.

Background

[0002] Many shoppers use lists, such as grocery lists, to keep track of items to be purchased. A common type of notepad which may be used for this purpose may include a stack of paper sheets that are bound together with a gummed adhesive and allow the user to remove, or tear off, individual sheets from the stack of sheets as needed. Other types of notebooks include three-ring binders, clamp-type binders, spiral-bound notebooks and "steno" pads.

[0003] Consumers frequently shop or conduct other errands armed with coupons or other loose items in addition to their shopping lists. Coupons are particularly popular with grocery shoppers, who frequently collect a number of coupons. As a result, shopping may become challenging as consumers attempt to simultaneously hold their list, hold their coupons, select and segregate the coupons to be redeemed, and select merchandise to be purchased.

[0004] U.S. Pat. No. D378,685, issued to French, et al., discloses a pouch having a plurality of small holes along a longitudinal edge. U.S. Pat. No. 6,488,433, issued to Wien, et al., discloses a binder having an outer transparent window with a zipper to provide access to the inner cavity of the pouch. U.S. Pat. No. 2,677,376, issued to Brunner, discloses a pocket for ring binders, wherein the pocket may be bound together with a stack of papers by a three-ring binder. Lastly, U.S. Pat. No. 5,378,022 to French discloses a pouch which can be slid over the cover of a notebook, such as a spiral bound notebook. However, the prior art fails to provide a solution to the problem of organizing coupons together with a notebook. Other prior attempts to solve this

problem include using envelopes and other similar storage containers to store the coupons and list. However, unsealed envelopes are unsatisfactory, because such envelopes do not properly retain the coupons therein. In addition, if the shopping list is kept on a separate sheet, the list can become separated from the coupons.

[0005] Accordingly, there is a need for a notebook for making lists and notes. There is a further need for a notebook capable of holding small objects such as coupons. Finally, there is a need for a notebook capable of keeping the objects secure to prevent accidental loss.

Summary

[0006] In one embodiment, the invention is a notebook including a stack of papers and a pouch having generally the same size and shape in top view as the stack of papers, the pouch including an inner cavity in which loose objects can be stored. The notebook further includes a binding mechanism binding the stack of papers and the pouch together, wherein at least part of the binding mechanism extends through the stack of papers and the pouch to bind the stack of papers and the pouch.

[0007] Other objects and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following description and the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0008] Further features of the present invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art to which the present invention relates from reading the following specification with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0009] Fig. 1 is a front perspective view of one embodiment of the notebook of the present invention;

[0010] Fig. 2A is a top plan view of the notebook of Fig. 1, wherein the pouch cover is transparent;

[0011] Fig. 2B is a right side elevational view of the cover of a pouch of the notebook of Fig. 1;

[0012] Fig. 3 is a top plan view of a paper sheet of the notebook of Fig. 1; and

[0013] Fig. 4 is a top plan view of the rear cover of the notebook of Fig. 1

Description of the Preferred Embodiment(s)

[0014] The general arrangement of one embodiment of a notebook 10 according to an embodiment of the present invention is shown in Fig. 1. The notebook 10 may include a pocket, pouch or front cover 12, one or more sheets or papers 14 formed into a stack, and a rear cover 16. The pouch cover 12, rear cover 16, and stack of papers 14 may be configured so that the stack of papers 14 may be located between the pouch cover 12 and the rear cover 16 when the notebook 10 is in its closed position. The pouch cover 12, stack of papers 14 and rear cover 16 may be pivotally coupled together by a binder or binding mechanism 18.

[0015] The pouch cover 12 may be generally rectangular in top view and have first and second lateral edges 20, 22 and first and second longitudinal edges 24, 26. In one embodiment, each longitudinal edge 24, 26 is about twice as long as each lateral edge 20, 22. The pouch cover 12 may include a cavity 28 formed by or between an upper panel or layer 30 (Fig. 2B) and a lower panel or layer 32. The upper and lower layers 30, 32 may be made of a generally flexible, pliable plastic material so that the cavity 28 or pouch cover 12 can be deformed to accommodate varying sizes and shapes of objects therein. In addition, the upper and lower layers 30, 32 may each be either generally opaque or generally transparent. However, in one embodiment, as will be discussed below, both of the layers 30, 32 may be generally transparent such that the pouch cover 12 is generally transparent.

[0016] In the illustrated embodiment the upper and lower layers 30, 32 face each other and are coupled together at their common edges 20, 22, 24, 26 to form a peripheral seal 34 around the cavity 28. The peripheral seal 34 of upper and lower layers 30, 32 may be formed by any appropriate means, such as adhesives, heat sealing and sonic welding.

[0017] A series of first or pouch openings 36 may be located proximate to, and extend generally parallel to, the first lateral edge 20. The pouch openings 36 may extend through both the upper and lower layers 30, 32. The pouch cover 12 may also have a slit, opening or mouth 38 to provide access to the cavity 28. The mouth 38 may be selectively opened and closed by a closure mechanism 40. The closure mechanism 40 may be any convenient type of closure mechanism including, but not limited to, a zipper, a slide fastener, snaps, hook-and-loop fasteners, brackets, loops, clips, interengaging shapes and the like.

[0018] One embodiment of a paper sheet 14 for the notebook 10 is shown in Fig. 3. The paper sheet 14 may have first and second lateral edges 42, 44 and first and second longitudinal edges 46, 48. A series of second or paper openings 50 may be located proximate to, and extend generally parallel to, the first lateral edge 42. The paper sheet 14 may be white, or may be tinted in one or more colors. The paper sheet 14 may also include printed guidelines 52 extending between the longitudinal edges 46, 48 to guide the user when making notations on the sheet 14.

[0019] One embodiment of the rear cover 16 is shown in Fig. 4. The rear cover 16 may have first and second lateral edges 54, 56 and first and second longitudinal edges 58, 60. A series of third or rear cover openings 62 may be located proximate to, and extend generally parallel to, the first lateral edge 54. The rear cover 16 may form a backing for the notebook 10, and may be made from any convenient material, such as cardboard or plastic. The rear cover 16 may have greater stiffness or rigidity than the paper sheets 14 so that the rear cover can act as a support or

backing element to lend stiffness to the notebook 10, and to serve as a backing element when the user wishes to write on the paper sheets 14. The rear cover 16 may be a natural color for the material selected, or may be colored.

[0020] The binding mechanism 18 may be a spiral-type or coil-type binding mechanism to pivotally connect the pouch cover 12, paper sheets 14 and rear cover 16 to form the notebook 10. In this case, of course, at least part of the binding mechanism 18 extends through the pouch cover 12, stack of papers 14 and rear cover 16. When the binding mechanism 18 is a coil or spiral binder, the binding mechanism extends through the aligned openings 20, 52, 60 to bind the components together. The binder 18 may be made from any appropriate material, such as plastic, composites and metal. The binder 18 may optionally be colored, if desired. In alternate embodiments the binder 18 may take any other convenient form, such as clips, clamps, fasteners, staples, adhesive bindings, etc.

[0021] With reference to Figs. 1-4, the notebook 10 may be assembled by first positioning the pouch cover 12 in relation to the stack of papers 14 such that the mouth 38 faces away from the paper sheets, then placing the paper sheets 14 behind the pouch cover 12 and aligning the paper openings 50 of the paper sheets 14 with the pouch openings 36 of pouch cover 12. The rear cover 16 may then be placed behind the stack of papers 14 such that the rear cover openings 62 of the rear cover 16 are aligned with the openings 36, 50 of the pouch cover 12 and paper sheets 14, respectively. The binder 18 can then be placed or wound through the aligned openings 36, 50, 62 to pivotally connect together the pouch cover 12, paper sheets 14 and rear cover 16.

[0022] As shown in Fig. 2A, in one embodiment the pouch cover 12 (that is, both layers 30, 32) are generally transparent. In this case the top paper sheet of the stack of sheets 14 may be visible, such as when generally no components are received in the cavity 28. In this case, a user

can view text written on the top sheet through the pouch cover 12 (or at least part of the text if coupons or other loose items are located in the cavity 28). Further, if at least layer 30 of the pouch cover 12 is generally transparent, the contents of the cavity 28 can be viewed without having to open the pouch cover 12.

[0023] As is readily apparent, the present invention offers a number of advantages. The cavity 28 provides a convenient, accessible and secure place to store coupons and other small objects. Further, the transparent upper layer 30 of the cavity 28 allows the user to view the contents of the pouch cover 12 without having to open the mouth 38. In addition, for embodiments of the present invention where layers 30, 32 are both transparent, the user may view the paper sheets 14 through the cavity 28. Since the pouch cover 12 is attached to the notebook 10 by the binding mechanism 18, the pouch and paper sheets 14 are more easily carried and used. The binding mechanism 18 also ensures that the pouch cover 12 and its contents will not be separated from the paper sheets 14. In the event that the cavity 28 is filled, the user may simply lift the pouch cover 12 to view the paper sheets 14 by pivoting the pouch about the binder 18.

[0024] From the above description of the invention, those skilled in the art will perceive improvements, changes, and modifications in the invention. Such improvements, changes, and modifications within the skill of the art are intended to be covered.